

NIXON, RICHARD

DRAWER 26

COMPARISON

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Abraham Lincoln Comparisons

Richard Nixon

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

'Controversial' After 108 Years Lincoln on the 'Scourge of War'

Herbert Mitgang, author and editor, has studied and written extensively about Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War era. His latest book was Abraham Lincoln: A Press Portrait, published in 1971.

By Herbert Mitgang

A hundred and eight years after Abraham Lincoln's second inaugural address, suddenly its words have become too "controversial" in Washington.

After a special composition was written for the Philadelphia Orchestra based on the language of the 16th President's speech on March 4, 1865, President Nixon's inaugural committee rejected it. The composer, Vincent Persichetti, of the Juilliard School of Music, said his orchestral work was deleted because it dealt with war — the Civil War, with its reminders of the Vietnam War.

The banned Lincoln text includes these famous words: "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away." The circumstances of Lincoln's inaugural have aroused new interest by scholars searching for parallels and the meaning for today's America. Here is an interpretation of President Lincoln and the country in the dying days of another war on that historic occasion.



Tom Braden

Lincoln's 'Embarrassing' Speech

WASHINGTON.

Like a lot of other former schoolboys who can't quite remember, I scurried to the text to find out why Abraham Lincoln's second Inaugural Address was thought by someone at the White House to be a possible source of "embarrassment" to President Nixon at inaugural time.

"It might embarrass the President" was the explanation given to composer Vincent Persichetti as the reason for canceling a 12-minute composition he had written for the inaugural ceremonies, using the Lincoln speech as text.

Why would it be embarrassing? Because the Lincoln speech is so good that nobody has ever equaled it? Because a comparison with Lincoln is embarrassing to normal men? These are not reasons which might come readily to the minds of White House assistants these days. They have trained themselves to think of Mr. Nixon in terms that will bear comparison with anybody. So, I think you have to go to the text of the Lincoln speech to see why somebody close to the President vetoed Mr. Persichetti's composition.

Entirely About War

Lincoln's second inaugural which he expected "to wear as well — perhaps better — than anything I have produced" was entirely about war. "At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office, there is less occasion for an extended address than at the first," he began.

"Then a statement somewhat in detail of the course to pursue seemed very fitting and proper; now at the expiration of four years, during which public declarations have constantly been called forth concerning every point and place of the great contest which still absorbs atten-

tion and engrosses the energies of the nation, little that is new could be present. The progress of our arms, upon which all else chiefly depends, is as well known to the public as to myself. It is, I trust, reasonably satisfactory and encouraging to all. With a high hope for the future, no prediction in that regard is ventured."

The comparison of "Mr. Lincoln's war," as some people then called it, with Mr. Nixon's war is surely embarrassing, and it is heartening that someone around the White House is still possessed of sufficient discernment to note it.

But Mr. Lincoln then turns to the purpose for which the war is being fought. The embarrassment becomes a little greater.

Mr. Lincoln began his statement with a quotation: " 'Woe unto the world because of offenses, for it needs be that offense come; but woe unto that man by whom the offense cometh.' "

True And Righteous

He proceeded: "If we shall suppose American slavery one of those offenses, which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove and that He gives to both north and south this terrible war, as was due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern that there is a departure from those divine attributes which believers in the living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may pass away; yet if it be God's will that it continue until the wealth piled by bondsmen by 250 years unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid with another drawn with the sword, as was said 3,000 years ago,

so still it must be said that judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

So Mr. Lincoln defines as to the purpose of his war and the judgment of history is that it was worth the struggle. The embarrassment is that Mr. Nixon cannot define the purpose of the war he has been waging any more than his predecessor could define it before him. Eight years. And all those bodies. For what? The White House assistant is right. It is embarrassing.



'Lincoln had more on his mind than charity when in 1864 he sent his cavalymen into the South to broadcast his amnesty leaflets.'

Guess Who
Else Wasn't
Like Abe?

By Roscoe C. Born

IF YOU MISSED the significant news from Washington these past few days, it is that Richard Nixon is not Abraham Lincoln.

This discovery made by various commentators who had already begun to suspect as much, was reported in the context of the amnesty issue: The charitable

Comment

Lincoln proclaimed amnesty for Secessionists even before the Civil War ended: by contrast, Nixon adamantly refuses to grant amnesty to those who deserted or fled the country to avoid service during the Vietnam War.

"Those who deserted must pay their price," the President told a press conference, "and the price is not a junket in the Peace Corps. . . . The price is a criminal penalty for disobeying the laws of the United States. If they want to return to the United States, they must pay the penalty. If they don't want to return, they are certainly welcome to stay in any country that welcomes them."

Granted, that is not the voice of a compassionate man. If Richard Nixon could not be an Abraham Lincoln, at least he didn't have to be so much of a Richard Nixon. He could have served our times better had he permitted himself a bit more understanding, if not sympathy, for the expatriates, even if he does feel that the broadest public interest dictates a firm stand against amnesty.

But to suggest that Nixon should have borrowed from Lincoln's consummate compassion is nonsense. Thoughtful and decent as he was, Lincoln had more on his mind than charity when in 1864 he sent his cavalymen riding and shooting into the South to broadcast his amnesty leaflets. He hoped to stir up a peace movement in the Confederacy and weaken its resolve.

Presto, Everybody Was Forgiven

One would also think, from the comparisons being offered today, that Lincoln's amnesty proclamation was outright and total. The war ended, and presto, everybody in the South was forgiven. Not so. Mr. Lincoln's amnesty was limited and conditional.

Some Southerners were excluded, mainly those of higher military and governmental rank, or former U.S. officers who had deserted to join the Confederacy. As for the rest, they could have amnesty if—if they would swear to a special loyalty oath that implied penitence for their acts. That oath pledged them to "henceforth faithfully support, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States" as well as acts of Congress or Presidential proclamations.

Amnesty or Jail

Maybe, though, there's something in this oath for Mr. Nixon to think about. Perhaps the choices are not just amnesty or jail. It's interesting to speculate on how our expatriates would react to the offer of such an oath. How many would raise their right hands forthwith, and come packing home? How many would insist that the same superior conscience that drove them abroad would not permit them now to swear new allegiance to the Government they found so immoral?

Anyway, that's the kind of amnesty Mr. Lincoln offered. Richard Nixon, quite clearly, is not Abraham Lincoln, as the discerning minds of the commentators have discovered. But in truth, Abraham Lincoln wasn't Abraham Lincoln either—at least not the one the commentators are remembering these days.

PATRIOTIC WOMEN CHEER

Ford Causes a Tremor

By Jacqueline Trescott

Star-News Staff Writer

The Women's Forum on National Security is a staunchly patriotic group that once a year assembles in Washington "to keep abreast of the issues of national security and peace," one member explained, and usually they arrange to mix with All-American heroes.

Last night, gowned, coiffed and jeweled, they were waiting for Vice President Gerald Ford, the current darling of patriotic gatherings. The excitement could have registered on a seismograph.

The chairman of the Forum, Vivian Fryc of Michigan, was appointed to greet Ford, who used to be her congressman. She clutched a napkin-wrapped glass and stared at the door, where a circle of Secret Service agents eagle-eyed the guests.

WHEN FORD, in a gray business suit and striped tie, walked in at precisely 7:30 p.m., the 30 headtable

guests formed a receiving line and chatted comfortably with him about the energy crisis and his job.

La Verne Wozniak, a member of the Ladies Auxiliary of the Polish Legion of American Veterans, said to a relaxed and cheerful Ford, "We're still concerned about the POWs and finding jobs for veterans, but we're also worried about America and this energy crisis."

Labor Secretary Peter Brennan, another honored guest, "dedicated to the President of the United States, the vice president and the Cabinet," said his department was "using all our manpower resources to train and place the young Vietnam veterans."

Most of the 1,000 Forum delegates had to be content with a distant Instamatic snapshot of the vice president.

After Jerry Rodis and his "Singing Strings" played a song for each of the 50 states, Ford spoke, mainly on the defense budget.

Ford was vigorously applauded, especially when he said, "The United States . . . must continue to modernize and improve the readiness of our combat forces."

THE DELEGATES, who represent 17 veteran or military organizations, cheered when Ford spoke of future competition between the Soviet and American military strength.

"Even as we have reduced U.S. forces and defense spending — measured in dollars of constant purchasing power — Soviet forces and spending have increased. To prevent a serious imbalance, we must continue to modernize and improve the readiness of our combat forces," said Ford.

He ended by saying "Abraham Lincoln would be very proud of the President's current diplomacy to reconcile differences and promote peace. We are proceeding in the spirit of Abraham Lincoln, with malice toward none."



KUPCINET

Kup's column

Abe Lincoln and his 'Watergate'

For more than a quarter century we have been devoting our Feb. 12 column to a "pilgrimage" to Abe Lincoln for an imaginary interview, in the course of which we would relate his comments and actions to the problems of the day. Abe Lincoln, in

death, remains as powerful an influence as when he occupied the White House more than five score years ago. But this anniversary of Mr. Lincoln's birth calls for something different—a comparison of his "Watergate" with President Nixon's.

HISTORIANS TODAY ARE CALLING "WATERGATE" the greatest presidential crisis the country has known. This may be so. But Mr. Lincoln experienced a much more grave crisis—the nation's survival, not one man's. The United States of America was rent asunder by the approaching Civil War and no President assumed office with the government's credibility and effectiveness at lower ebb. Little remembered today is the fact that in 1860 the prophets of doom felt that the Confederacy would win the war. And a victory for the South would mean an end to the great American experiment in democracy.

WITH THE OUTBREAK OF CIVIL WAR in April of 1861, Mr. Lincoln resorted to harsh internal security measures, which can be likened to President Nixon's Watergate methods. Spies and detectives were employed to "bug" pro-Southern, anti-North, anti-Negro and defeatists groups. The "bugging" in Mr. Lincoln's pre-electronic day consisted of infiltrating the opposition, opening their mail and subsidizing informers.

BUT THERE WAS AN ESSENTIAL difference in modus operandi, as historian **Harold Hyman** of Rice University points out in *Argosy* magazine. Mr. Lincoln never allowed his spying apparatus to be used against even the most vociferous political opponents, who were numerous. And ol' Abe never tried to disassociate himself from any knowledge about, or responsibility for, his security methods. On the contrary, he insisted on being informed of every move and more, he insisted on keeping the public informed on what was happening to discourage other "disloyal" opponents.

FOUR GLARING CONTRASTS BETWEEN ABE LINCOLN and Richard Nixon emerge in a study of their respective security measures. Unlike Mr. Nixon, Abe Lincoln never confused open dissent with lack of patriotism. Unlike Mr. Nixon, Abe Lincoln developed a policy of keeping the press and public informed on all details of the security measures. Unlike Mr. Nixon, Abe Lincoln made sure his spying apparatus avoided the easy way of "overkill," which has become a mark of Watergate. And unlike Mr. Nixon, Abe Lincoln never permitted the men close to him in the White House to lower themselves to standards below his.



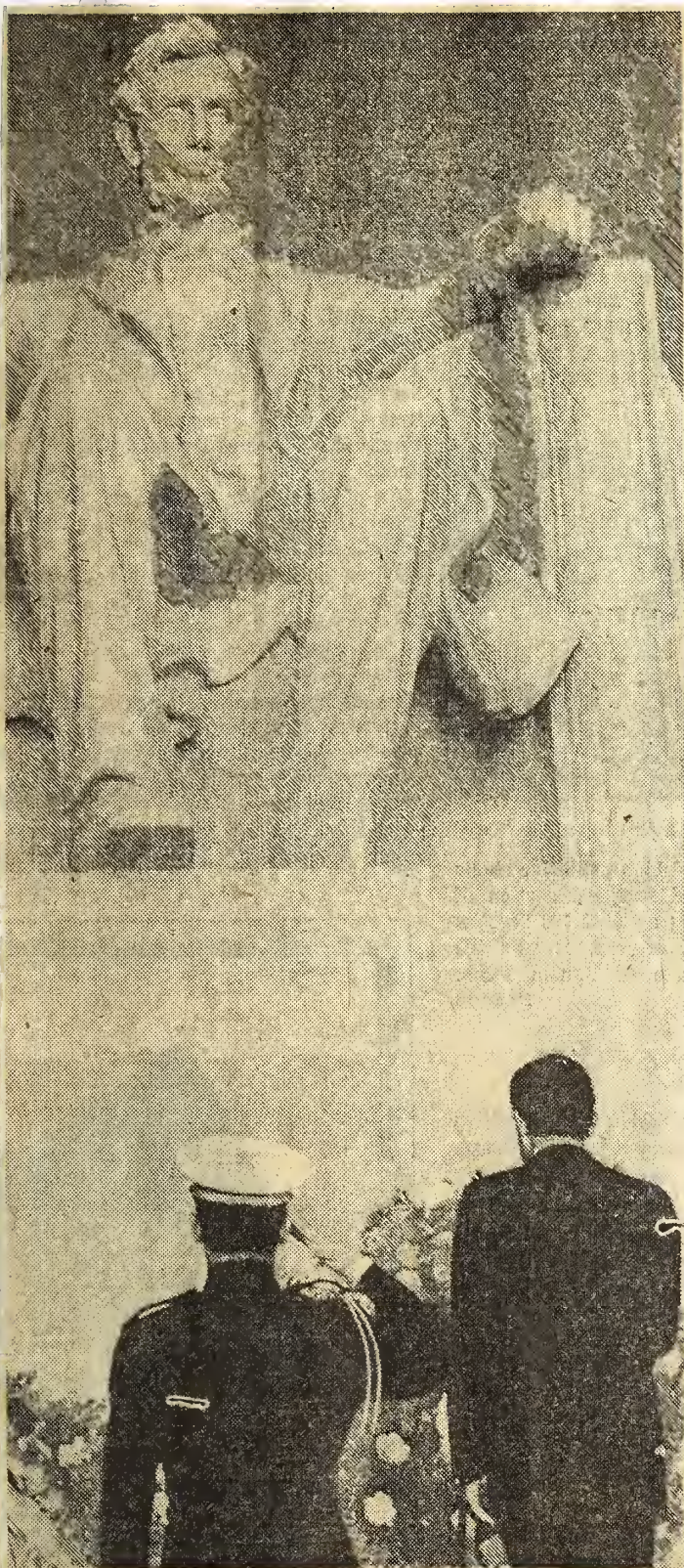
ABRAHAM LINCOLN

THE SENATE WATERGATE COMMITTEE, among other agencies conducting investigations, has asked for a meeting with President Nixon, which he has ignored. Abe Lincoln faced up to a comparable situation in a far different manner. Rumors circulating in Washington at the time hinted that Lincoln's wife, Mary, was a Southern sympathizer (four of her brothers died fighting for the Confederacy) and might even be a spy. A Senate committee, hearing these rumors, called for a secret meeting to investigate Mrs. Lincoln.

ABE LINCOLN LEARNED OF THE SECRET MEETING and acted with dispatch. Uninvited and unheralded, he surprised the committee. He spoke slowly and deliberately: "I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, appear of my own volition before this committee of the Senate to say that I, of my own knowledge, know that it is untrue that any of my family holds treasonable communications with the enemy." Having attested this, he departed. And the speechless committee dropped all consideration of the rumors that the wife of the President was betraying the Union.

ABE LINCOLN SERVED ONE TERM IN THE HOUSE, during which time he charged President James Polk with not telling the truth about our involvement in the Mexican War. Lincoln introduced a resolution that many today say bears another similarity to Watergate. Said Lincoln: "Let the President answer with facts, not with arguments. Let him remember he sits where George Washington sat, and so remembering, let him answer as Washington would answer. Let him attempt no evasion, no equivocation. But if he cannot or will not do this, then I shall be fully convinced that he is deeply conscious of being in the wrong."

BACK ON THE BEAT: Our heartiest best to new Police Supt. James Rochford. He has four qualities going for him that augur well for Chicago. He has the know-how, he's fair, he's tough and he has the respect of fellow policemen. . . . Another romance for Zsa Zsa Gabor? She dined with Everett Kovler, head of Jim Beam Distillery, at the Drake's International Club and sparks were ignited. . . . The Tavern Club has a new president: Russ Stewart of Field Enterprises. . . . Birthdaying: Forrest Tucker, Lorne Greene and Sydney (WLS) Welsman. And happy wedding anniversary greetings to Daily News columnist Mort (Hair! Hair!) Edelstein and his Sylvia. . . . Tuesday treat: "No Sex Please—We're British" at Pheasant Run, starring Anne Jeffreys, who is sexy and non-British.



UPI Telephoto

Nixon hails Lincoln

President Nixon placing wreath at foot of statue of Abraham Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial to mark anniversary of the birth of the 16th President yesterday. Nixon said he draws strength from the way Lincoln bore up under criticism. Story on page 6.

'Withstood abuse'

Nixon praises Lincoln's grit

By Aldo Beckman

Chicago Tribune Press Service

WASHINGTON, Feb. 12—President Nixon drove to the Lincoln Memorial today to hail Abraham Lincoln as a man of character who stood up under bitter attacks against him.

"When we examine the American Presidents, it is quite clear that no President in history has been more vilified or was more vilified during the time he was President than Lincoln," Nixon told several hundred persons during ceremonies honoring the birth of Lincoln.

There was no mention of the Watergate scandals, but it seemed apparent that the President was anxious to draw the parallel.

"THOSE WHO knew him [Lincoln] . . . have written that he was very deeply hurt by what was said about him and drawn about him," Nixon said. "But, on the other hand, Lincoln had that great strength of character never to display it, always to stand tall and strong and firm no matter how harsh or unfair the criti-

cism might be."

"These elements of greatness, of course, inspire us all today," he said, before placing a wreath at the foot of the Lincoln statue.

Nixon said that people often forget that Lincoln "was a world statesman at that time that America was not a world power."

EVEN AS American was torn by civil strife, Lincoln "with that mystical sense of destiny and vision saw it all ahead when he said, 'Ours is earth's last, best hope,'" Nixon said.

If Lincoln were alive today, Nixon asserted, he would hope that America, "with its strength and wealth, would not turn away from greatness despite the fact that some other nations in the world turn inward, failing to assume their responsibilities for building a peaceful world."

Lincoln would have realized, Nixon said, that peace and freedom would not survive in today's world without America's strength, will, respect, and determination.

Nixon lauds Lincoln's 'strength under pressure'

By Tom Littlewood

Sun-Times Bureau

WASHINGTON — Abraham Lincoln continues to inspire his countrymen in different ways, depending on their stations in life, the color of their skin, the troubles that nag them.

President Nixon marched up the steps of the Lincoln Memorial Tuesday to honor the Republican Party's first President and to derive his own special brand of faith from Lincoln's example.

No president was more vilified than Lincoln, Mr. Nixon recalled, but the quality of greatness that Mr. Nixon chose to remember, "perhaps more than anything else, was his strength, his poise under pressure."

Lincoln was deeply hurt by the words that were said about him and the newspaper cartoons that were drawn of him. Mr. Nixon told the few Lincoln buffs, tourists and school children gathered for the annual wreath-laying ceremony.

"But," he declared with determination, "Lincoln had that great strength of character never to display it, always to stand tall and strong and firm no matter how harsh or unfair the criticism might be."

From the foot of the majestic statue, Mr. Nixon looked out over the great mall toward the Capitol, where in a few weeks the question of his im-

peachment is expected to come before the House of Representatives.

The President attended the ceremonies on short notice, substituting his own impromptu remarks for a scheduled "message from the President" expected in the form of a written message to be read by someone else.

Mr. Nixon laid a wreath of red and white carnations beneath Lincoln's statue and exchanged quips and handshakes

with schoolchildren outside the memorial on his way to his limousine.

Coatless in the chill February wind, he appeared to be trying to project a will to stand firm, to maintain his poise in the face of demands for impeachment or resignation. These have been and remain, the essential points of his defense strategy.

There is a special irony, though, in Mr. Nixon's comparison of his difficulties —

and his strength of character — to those of Lincoln.

Many of his advisers in the White House have been urging the President to take his case to the people, to tour the country and answer the accusations.

This he has not done — except in the South.

His last speaking appearance before an audience that could be called the general public outside Washington and north of the Mason-Dixon Line, was last June 15 in Pekin, Ill., at the dedication of the Everett M. Dirksen Memorial Library.

He has addressed crowds in Florida and Memphis and Macon and Columbia, S.C., and elsewhere in the South, but not in the Northern cities. In his continuing difficulty, he finds

comfort, apparently, in the states of the old Confederacy.

Mr. Nixon is due to depart the capital on Wednesday for five days of sunshine at his Key Biscayne (Fla.) compound.

On the return trip, he will stop off Monday at Huntsville, Ala., for an "Honor America Day" celebration. Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace will be there, too, for what is planned as a display of patriotism on the holiday now designated as George Washington's birthday.

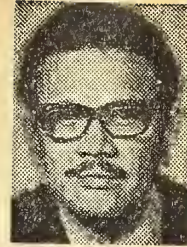
The trip to Florida and back

will be by presidential jet. A White House spokesman said the President does not feel compelled to travel either by commercial aircraft or by train because this will be a "working" trip. Over the Christmas holiday he flew to southern California by commercial airliner, but that was described as a vacation.

Before leaving for Florida, Mr. Nixon is expected to undergo his annual medical checkup at a military hospital here.

Vernon Jarrett

A revised look at Abe Lincoln



DO PEOPLE still bother to ask questions about the great men whose birthdays give us an excuse to take a holiday?

Tuesday's 165th anniversary of Abraham Lincoln, the brooding 16th President who is credited with freeing the slaves and preserving the Union, is a case in point. At some point every American should take time out to assess the whole Lincoln.

The contradictions in this man's postures and feelings offer us a good education in the history of the political ethic that has dominated America's domestic policies regardless of the party in power.

I REACHED ADULTHOOD with an image of Lincoln as a man not given to compromise on high moral grounds, a poet of a fellow who under ordinary circumstances would have preferred to spend most of his time coining memorable phrases, witty aphorisms for future generations to live by.

Abe Lincoln, that melancholy, uncompromising foe of all human bondage.

Not so. Lincoln was an expert on the art of compromise. The former rail splitter could straddle the fence on even the most moral of issues if he thought the stakes were high enough, I finally learned.

And then came another shocker: Lincoln the maneuvering political boss—boss as used in the modern sense.

Not only does Lincoln's history disclose that he was willing to tolerate slavery in the South—as long as it did not expand—he also nursed a lifetime dedication to the idea that the deportation of black people from American soil was the best solution to the race question.

President Lincoln made his feelings official on Dec. 3, 1861, in his message to Congress. He clearly urged Congress to appropriate money for the purchase of land outside the United States for the purpose of colonizing blacks fleeing the Confederate-held South and crossing into Union territory.

Congress followed up by allocating \$600,000 for the deportation of blacks freed by the District of Columbia Emancipation Act and the Second Con-

fiscation Act. The editors of a black newspaper were so angered at Lincoln and Congress that they suggested the money be used to deport the slave-owners who had caused the war.

Deportation became an obsession with Lincoln, it appears. On August 14, 1862, he met with five black spokesmen, including Frederick Douglass and Martin R. Delaney, at which time he urged them to recruit "25, 50, or 100 colored families" to voluntarily begin colonizing an area in Central America.

Again the proposal was soundly denounced by black abolitionists, including Douglass and many less publicized black leaders.

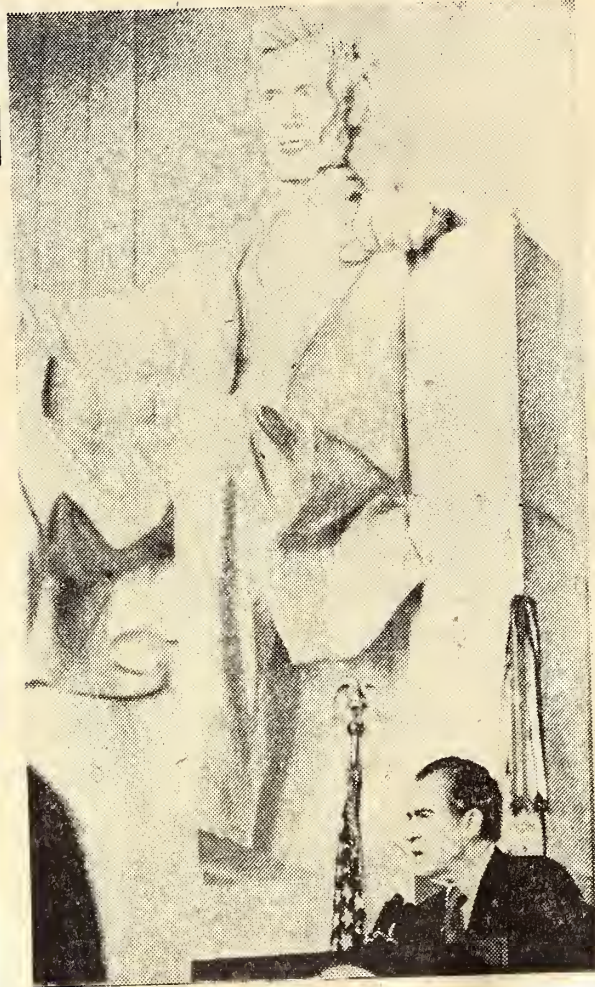
However, Lincoln persisted to the extent of appointing a United States senator as the government's colonization agent for the Central American project. By the autumn of 1862, 500 blacks had been recruited, but it was later disclosed that Lincoln had been sold a sucker's dream by a land speculator.

Lincoln was the victim of another scheme by a speculator named Bernard Kock, who offered the government an island off the southern coast of Haiti. Lincoln gave him a contract in December, 1862, and sent 500 freed blacks off sailing. Kock collected \$50 per head and left the emigrants without housing or food. One hundred died and Lincoln had to order their return.

BUT PROBABLY the most interesting of all Lincolns is the one who erected a sophisticated patronage system to help finance his reelection campaign in 1864. A loyal American who had been employed via Lincoln was expected to turn back regularly 10 per cent of his paycheck to the Republican campaign fund.

One Henry J. Raymond, chairman of the Republican National Committee, rigged up a regular squeeze on all who held jobs or had war contracts with the Navy Yard. Lincoln's principles may have objected, but his political instincts employed the gag rule.

So when in the summer of 1972 I heard President Nixon declare: "We are the proud heirs of the party of Lincoln," I had to ask myself: Which Lincoln?



“ . . . With Malice Toward None ”

To The Editor:

It was a moment that could have lived in history. On a surprise visit to the tomb of Abraham Lincoln, President Nixon stood at the feet of Lincoln's statue, and addressed the nation.

The moment died. No words were spoken of the pain of a war-torn people. No recognition was given to the divided families, the army of sons who still stand against the government of this country, though they stand without weapons. No hope was expressed for the reunification under one leadership that we all seek so deperately.

In his time, Lincoln was willing to forget the guns turned against him, and willing to see those who had committed treason go unpunished if they would return to their homes.

In our turn, we must be equally willing to declare amnesty. The will to sacrifice one's popularity for the sake of reconciliation — that is the strength we stand in awe of, when we think of Lincoln. It is a strength we still must find, if not in our leadership, then in our hearts, if ever we are to unite again under one government.

WARREN HOSKINS

Sorting Through The Lincoln Myths



By RICHARD K. SHULL

Sitting at a film location in Alta Loma, Calif., Hal Holbrook explained his efforts to distill the essence of Abraham Lincoln in a six-part series of TV specials.

The programs are drawn from Carl Sandburg's biography of Lincoln and titled "Sandburg's Lincoln." They will be broadcast on NBC network over the next two seasons beginning Friday, Sept. 6.

"I'd be lying if I told you everything is perfect, but we're hacking, clawing and fighting away to do the best we can. And I think we're winning.

"One of the unusual parts of playing this is that I can't find anything wrong with him. Usually I look for a weakness in a good man or a good point in a bad man to give him dimension. But he was a good, good man, a wonderful man."

But didn't Lincoln trample on the Constitution within days after he took an oath of office to uphold it? Suspending habeas corpus? Calling up troops without consent of Congress?

Holbrook answered with some political sting:

"Nixon has tried in some cases to draw a parallel between himself and Lincoln to explain his actions. Lincoln was dealing with an armed rebellion in the country. Nixon was dealing with people who had talked about him.

"Another point: Lincoln didn't hide anything. He was careful to keep everything open to the press and the people."



Hal Holbrook

REAL MYTHS

Continuing his impression of Lincoln, Holbrook said, "I want to humanize him so people can identify with the man. We're not dragging him down to common clay, but we want to get him out of stone and marble and into flesh and blood.

"We're not trying to destroy myths. I adore proper myths. We're trying to bring the myths closer to the people.

"I'm not trying to make Lincoln a hick. But he was an ugly, diffident hick, one of our first Western presidents. He was a moody, manic-depressive born of fears and insecurities. He'd probably be going to a psychiatrist today, so many things were against him, but out of it came greatness.

"It makes my flesh crawl to think about Lincoln with the trumpets blaring and John Brown's body going by."

He referred to the image projected in movies of reverence and immortal words enunciated in the stentorian voice of a Raymond Massey. It wasn't that way, Holbrook insists.

Those in Washington who weren't openly hostile to Lincoln snickered behind his back. And reporters covering his speeches as far back as the Lincoln-Douglas debates jibed at his high, nasal voice.

And in retaliation, Lincoln accentuated his own homeliness—such as the stovepipe hat which made him appear at least a foot taller than anyone around.

"Lincoln deliberately refused to behave like a president," Holbrook added.

ALL CONTRADICTIONS

If there are contradictions in Holbrook's analysis of the Lincoln he'll play on TV, it's understandable. Carl Sandburg, who came closest of anyone in this century to knowing Lincoln in his six-volume biography, concluded Lincoln was a mass of contradictions.

Holbrook reckons the Sandburg work, from which the six TV segments are drawn, could easily lend themselves to 60 such programs.

So how was the decision made of what to eliminate or include for the TV series? Producer-director George Schaefer, an old hand at staging Lincoln for film and theater, explained:

"I decided, no chronology of events, and no repeating of events seen before. There won't be a Gettysburg address and there won't be an assassination. The programs will concentrate on six aspects of the man.

"The first program will deal with Mrs. Lincoln's husband—Lincoln as a father. Another with Lincoln as commander-in-chief of the Army. Another as a lawyer. Another as a politician. Another on the elements which made him a judge of character.

"And finally, one about the last week in Washington before the assassination.

Ron Powers

The undoing of the 'first TV President'

The man whom some called "the first television President" is deposed now — and the medium that was his making provided a close-up of his undoing.

Richard M. Nixon was indeed the first President to build his administration around a core of advisers who were schooled in the TV-related arts of persuasion and salesmanship, rather than in theories of social stewardship.

In H.P. Haldeman, John Ehrlichman, Ronald Ziegler (the former Disneyland tour guide who at the end had the status of senior adviser to the President) and other key men, Mr. Nixon found a sophisticated grasp of television technique that seemed to answer several of his most basic instinctive needs: an illusion of candor, a flattering public appearance, an ability to motivate the public's emotions through selective information and — perhaps most important of all — relief from the burdensome notion of accountability.

Haldeman in particular molded Mr. Nixon as a television President. Although he has correctly been identified as a strong and influential decision-maker on the President's staff, Haldeman is still underappreciated as a mentor of Mr. Nixon the television master. As far back as 1960, Mr. Nixon was turning to the former J. Walter Thompson advertising executive for advice on how to use the enormous power of the fledgling medium.

And the advice came copiously. From better makeup application to an understanding of "key" lights to a grasp of visual aid symbols (the ever-present lapel flag, the bust of Lincoln, the family Christmas-tree-trimming scene in 1972) to his handpicked press-conference panels during campaigns, Mr. Nixon progressed in the art of television control.

The progression didn't stop there. Consider those epochal concurrences between the Nixon Presidency and the television industry:

— His 1962 televised "Checkers" speech that salvaged his campaign for the vice presidency.

— Vice President Agnew's 1969 attack on network newsmen as "a small band of privileged men, elected by no one" which threw a pall on disinterested coverage of the administration.

— Telecommunications adviser Clay T. Whitehead's 1971 "ideological phantoms" speech, which provided a glimpse of the license-renewal threat: the Nixon people were willing to invoke against coverage they considered damaging.

Nixon learned how to use a lapel flag and Lincoln bust as visual aids on television

— Mr. Nixon's subsequent attempt to seize control of public television by packing its funding board with administration loyalists.

— Administration-backed license challenges against Washington Post-Newsweek television stations in Florida in the wake of early Watergate revelations by those publications.

— A less definable, but pervasive system of language used by presidential spokesmen in talking to the press. This language had its origins not in classic exposition but in the TV-related science of advertising, which often uses words to obfuscate and distort, as well as inform. "Protective reaction strike," "relocating" a population (as in South Vietnam) and "imperative" are good examples of this language.

From all this evidence, and a good deal more, many observers of Richard Nixon have concluded that he was our "first television President."

But was he?

Many of his attempts to exploit and manipulate television ultimately evaporated, or even backfired on him. The "Checkers speech" became a joke. Although the Agnew and White-

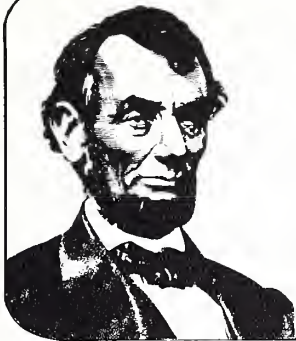


head diatribes against network news left some lasting impressions on public opinion, they did not succeed in stifling the voice of the electronic press. The contrived, campaign "press conferences" became an inadvertent symbol of sham — and when Mr. Nixon tried a similar charade at a National Assn. of Broadcasters' convention in Houston last summer, CBS's Dan Rather spoiled it with a return that was to haunt the President for the remainder of his days in office.

(President: "Are you running for something, Mr. Rather?" Rather: "No, sir, Mr. President. Are you?")

Mr. Nixon never did master television. Television finally mastered him, in fact: The pretense and evasion could not be supported indefinitely on the small screen. And the video contrast between Mr. Nixon's eternal unreality and the earnest candor of the Ervins, Bakers, Ralstons and Rodins ultimately helped in turning public opinion against him.

Richard Nixon was not our "first television President." His values, his orientation, his instincts were rooted in the pre-TV days of the 1940s. Our first television President — a creature born, reared and schooled in an electronic culture — is among us now, anonymous.



Lincoln Lore

January, 1975

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation...Mark E. Neely, Jr., Editor. Published each month by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46801.

Number 1643

Abraham Lincoln Did NOT Defend His Wife Before the Committee on the Conduct of the War

We are witnessing a Lincoln myth in the making, and it provides a rare opportunity to see what cultural forces are necessary to promote to the status of popular myth one of the many obscure and doubtful stories about the sixteenth President. The event in question is Abraham Lincoln's alleged visit to a secret session of a congressional committee investigating rumors that Mary Todd Lincoln was leaking military secrets to the Confederacy.

I. Origins of the Story

Lincoln's visit was first described in an article which appeared in a Washington, D.C., newspaper sometime after 1905 (the article refers to the "late" John Hay, who died in 1905). The author, E. J. Edwards, attributed the "anecdote" to Thomas L. James, who had heard it "at the time he was Postmaster General in Garfield's cabinet" from a "member of the Senate committee on the conduct of the war in Lincoln's first administration." Edwards's article continued:

"You doubtless remember," said the senator to Gen. James, "that during a crucial period of the war many malicious stories were in circulation, based upon the suspicion that Mrs. Lincoln was in sympathy with the Confederacy. These reports were inspired by the fact that some of Mrs. Lincoln's relatives were in the Confederate service. At last reports that were more than vague gossip were brought to the attention of some of my colleagues in the Senate. They made specific accusation that Mrs. Lincoln was giving important information to secret agents of the Confederacy. These reports were laid before my committee and the committee thought it an imperative duty to investigate them . . . One morning our committee purposed taking up the reports that imputed disloyalty to Mrs. Lincoln. The

sessions of the committee were necessarily secret. . . . [Suddenly] at the foot of the table, standing solitary, his hat in his hand, his tall form towering above the committee members, Abraham Lincoln stood . . . The President had not been asked to come before the committee, nor was it suspected that he had information that we were to investigate the reports, which, if true, fastened treason upon his family in the White House.

"At last Lincoln . . . said:

"I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, appear of my own volition before this committee of the Senate to say that I, of my own knowledge, know that it is untrue that any of my family hold treasonable communication with the enemy."

"... we sat for some moments speechless. Then by tacit agreement, no word being spoken, the committee dropped all consideration of the rumors that the wife of the President was betraying the Union . . . We were so greatly affected that the committee adjourned for the day."

Edwards's article, the original title of which is clipped from the copy of the article in the Lincoln Library and Museum collection, was privately republished as a pamphlet entitled *The Solitude of Abraham Lincoln* by Gilbert A. Tracy in Putnam, Connecticut in 1916. A statement by Tracy in pen on the title page says that only thirty copies were made, and a pencilled statement made on the cover at a later date claims that only sixteen were printed. No alterations were made in the story, and it was published, according to the title page, by permission of the author.

The story would very likely have disappeared into the obscurity typical of stories from rare pamphlets had Emanuel



Thomas L. James

Courtesy of The New-York Historical Society, New York City
FIGURE 1.

Hertz's *Abraham Lincoln: A New Portrait* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1931) not repeated it (on pages 238-239). Carl Sandburg probably picked it up from Hertz; he did not quote Edwards verbatim, as Hertz had, but the story appears in the second volume of Sandburg's *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1939), pages 199-200. In a chapter about the events of late 1862 and early 1863, Sandburg said that "Senate members of the Committee on the Conduct of the War had set a secret morning session for attention to reports that Mrs. Lincoln was a disloyalist." The poet thus added to Edwards's anecdote a date and one subtle embellishment which will be discussed later.

Again the story seemed likely to vanish from popular consciousness. Despite the fact that it was ready-made ammunition for Mary Lincoln's apologists, the first of a long line of these, Ruth Painter Randall, discredited the account. Her *Mary Lincoln: Biography of a Marriage* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953) related the story but admitted that the "evidence is too vague and in part inaccurate . . . to justify an established historical conclusion that this incident occurred. One cannot accept Lincoln's words literally from such a long-delayed, indirect account and the dramatization is highly seasoned. The thought comes to mind that this story might be a confused version of Lincoln's interviewing members of the House Judiciary Committee in regard to the Wickoff-Watt imbroglio." Mrs. Randall had seen the story in Hertz's book, and then checked the original clipping in the Lincoln National Life Foundation collection. She used her sources scrupulously and threw cold water on the story, but her condemnation was mild and rather tentative; she felt that the story had at least the virtue of pointing "up the ghastly situation created by the idea that Mrs. Lincoln was disloyal." As a partisan of Mrs. Lincoln, Mrs. Randall wanted to believe it, but her respect for historical rigor prevented her from doing so.

Early in July, 1973, Connecticut Senator Lowell Weicker read Carl Sandburg's version of the story into the records of the Senate Watergate hearings and into the political conscience of the nation. Weicker read the anecdote before a national television audience to show that the first Republican President had been willing to give testimony before a congressional committee. Senator Weicker's staff may have picked the story up from the newspapers. Bob Cromie had printed the anecdote as supplied by Lincoln-student Ralph Newman in the *Chicago Tribune* of June 2, 1973. The story was repeated by Philip Warden eleven days later in the same newspaper.

This political use of the Edwards-James-Sandburg story gave it a currency that no attempt simply to dramatize Lincoln's beleaguered presidency or to defend Mrs. Lincoln's reputation could have provided. Almost overnight Lincoln's visit to the Committee became not an obscure anecdote but an important moral, if not legal, precedent. Weicker willingly quoted the statement that Lincoln "had not been asked to come before the committee." Senator Ervin, Chairman of the Senate Watergate Committee, never held that the Committee could issue a subpoena for President Nixon's testimony, and the Lincoln story was left as a moral example of willingness to volunteer information. President Ford has tacitly testified to the power of the moral example by appearing voluntarily before a congressional committee himself.

II. Is the Story True?

To date, Ruth Painter Randall is the principal, if reluctant, challenger of the story's truthfulness. She noted immediately that the Committee on the Conduct of the War was a *joint* committee made up of members from both houses of Congress. Thus E.J. Edwards's original article erred in terming it a Senate committee. Here Sandburg's embellishment becomes important. He also knew the Committee was a joint committee, but the poet in him liked the drama and solemnity of the occasion. Although he did not quote the story entirely from Edwards (via Hertz), Sandburg did seize on such dramatic passages from the original account as these for their literary impact: "Had he come by some incantation, thus of a sudden appearing before us unannounced, we could not have been more astounded"; the president's eyes revealed "above all an indescribable sense of his complete isolation." Therefore Sandburg's quiet alteration of the original words "member of the Senate committee" to "Senate members of the Committee" is proof that he did not possess Mrs. Randall's

respect for historical rigor and discipline; he wrote what he wanted to believe and was willing to alter the record to fit it. In so doing, he also gave the story new life, for he thus eliminated the one glaring error which would have tipped off everyone thereafter that the story was based on very flimsy evidence. Even the most cursory glance at the multi-volume reports of the Committee on the Conduct of the War reveals that they were signed by House members as well as Senate members.

Sandburg, however, nearly made a serious error of his own by claiming that the Committee "set a secret morning session" to investigate the rumors. Edwards had said that the Committee's sessions were "necessarily secret." In fact, *all* sessions of the Committee on the Conduct of the War were held in secret. As a committee set up to investigate military operations during wartime, it could hardly have held *public* sessions with any hope of gaining testimony from the generals it interviewed. Edwards's version, of course, left open the possibility that *all* sessions were secret; Sandburg's version came nearer implying that this session was unique for its secrecy.

There are more reasons to doubt the story than these. Sandburg, probably for stylistic reasons, eliminated Edwards's remark that the anecdote had been "related to Gen. Thomas L. James at the time he was Postmaster General in Garfield's Cabinet." This time unconsciously, Sandburg considerably improved on the original by expanding the period of time in which the anecdote could have been told. According to the original version, however, this time was very limited, for Garfield was President for only six months, being assassinated in September of the first year of his administration. Postmaster General James, then, had to hear the anecdote from a Senate member of the Committee on the Conduct of the War in 1881.

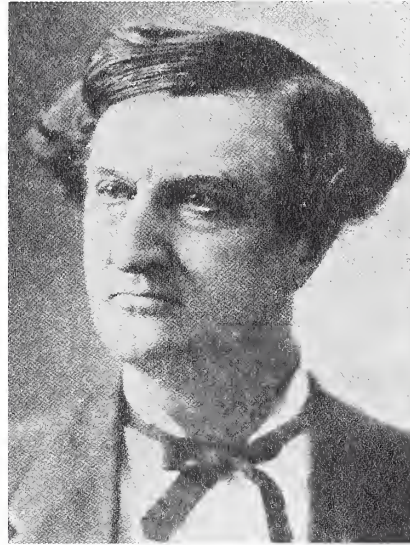
The problem is that most of these men were dead by then. Senator Benjamin Franklin Wade of Ohio, Chairman of the Committee, died in 1878. Senator Zachariah Chandler, who also served on the Committee throughout the war years, died in 1879. Tennessee's Andrew Johnson, who served on the Committee only until he became military governor of Tennessee in 1862, died in 1875. Senator Joseph A. Wright of Indiana also served on the Committee for a brief period, but he died in 1867. Only two other senators ever served on the Committee. One was Pennsylvania's Charles Rollin Buckalew, who was not elected to the Senate until 1863. The other was Oregon's Benjamin Franklin Harding, who served in the Senate only after December 1, 1862 (he filled the seat vacated by the death of Lincoln's friend Edward D. Baker). Buckalew and Harding both lived until 1899.

If Thomas L. James heard the anecdote in 1881 from a Senator who had been a member of the Committee on the Conduct of the War, he heard it from Buckalew or Harding. Buckalew seems an unlikely candidate because he was a Democrat. James was a long-time Republican, and it is doubtful that he had any special relationship with Buckalew. The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War could meet without a quorum. In practice, this meant that no Democratic members of the Committee had to be present at the sessions, and critics of the Committee frequently complained that the minority members were ignored. It seems very doubtful indeed that Republicans would have invited Buckalew to be present at a meeting discussing rumors which, if true, would have doomed the Republican administration and probably destroyed the party. Moreover, Buckalew left the Senate for good after his one term. If James heard the story from this Democrat, either the Postmaster General travelled to Pennsylvania to see him, or Buckalew travelled to Washington, for Buckalew returned to Washington as a Representative only in 1887.

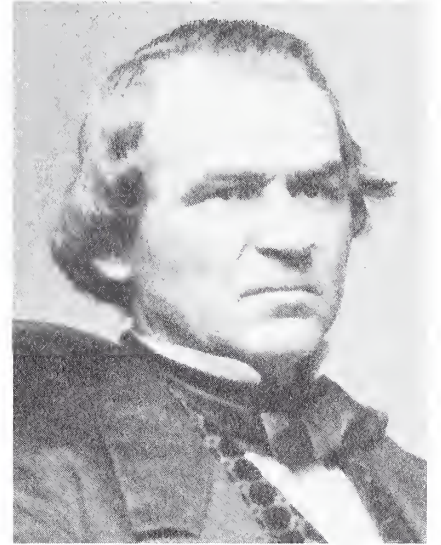
B.F. Harding, on the other hand, was a Republican like James; this fact increases the possibility of intimacy with James and the all-important possibility that Harding might have been privy to a meeting of such critical importance to the Republican party as the one Edwards and James described. However, Harding served only one term as United States Senator. According to a biographical sketch supplied by the Oregon Historical Society, Harding "retired" to Oregon after 1865 and died there thirty-four years later. He did not hold any national office, elective or appointive, after 1865. Unless James (a New Yorker) visited Oregon or Harding visited Washington, it is impossible for James to have heard the story from this, the only Republican senator who had served on the



Benjamin F. Wade

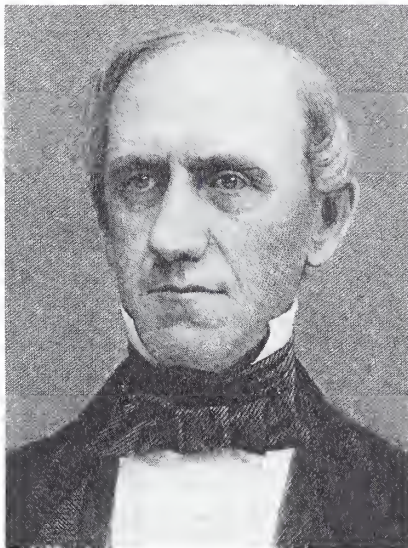


Zachariah Chandler



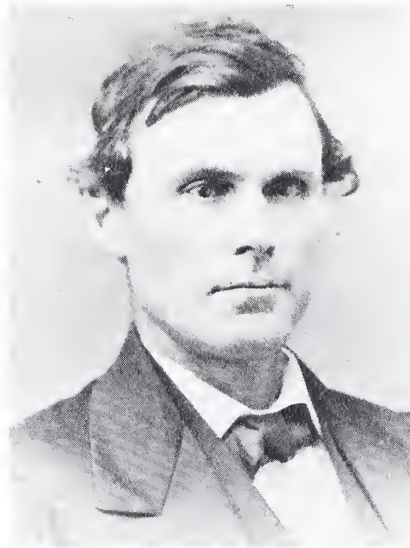
Pictures from the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Andrew Johnson



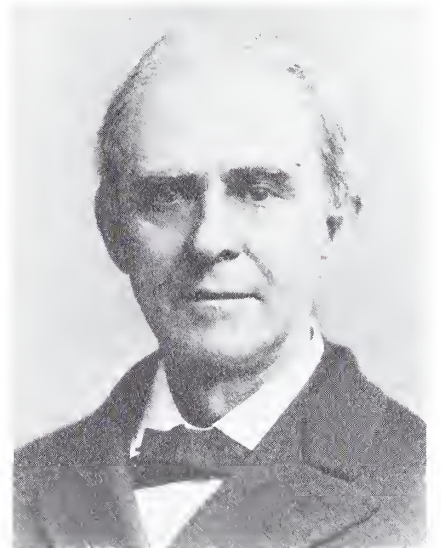
From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Joseph A. Wright



*From the Oregon Historical Society,
Portland*

Benjamin F. Harding



*From the Historical Society of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia*

Charles R. Buckalew

FIGURE 2. COMMITTEE ON THE CONDUCT OF THE WAR, SENATE MEMBERS

The popular view of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War stems primarily from T. Harry Williams's first book, *Lincoln and the Radicals* ([Madison]: University of Wisconsin Press, 1941). Written with the flamboyance and combativeness of youth, *Lincoln and the Radicals* bristles with sharp characterizations and strong language. Members of the more anti-slavery wing of the Republican party are consistently called "Jacobins"; Thaddeus Stevens was "caustic, terrifying, clubfooted"; the radicals were "in the embarrassing, and often sinister, position of regarding Union defeats on the battlefield as helpful to their cause." Against the onslaught of these Huns, Abraham Lincoln was, "Like the Lucretia threatened with ravishment, he averted his fate by instant compliance." The Committee's popular reputation fell to such a low level that Harry S. Truman claimed in his *Memoirs* in 1955 that, when he was a Senator during World War II, he set up a congressional investigation in such a way as to avoid the errors of that earlier congressional committee, which had been "of material assistance to the Confederacy." Lincoln's image changed before that of the Committee did, and historians came increasingly to see President Lincoln as an assertive and adept politician who steered the country's course between the radicals and the conservatives in the party. Thus the Committee was still seen as malign in nature, but it was no longer deemed to have influential and inquisitorial power over Union policy. Hans L. Trefousse's article, "The Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War: A Reassessment," *Civil War History*, X (March, 1964), 5-19, thus reversed Williams's view of the relationship between the President and the Committee: "In many ways he used the group, taking advantage of its impatience in a manner so skillful as to bring about great reforms despite conservative opposition." To date, there is no full-length study of the work of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, although the records of the testimony given before the Committee have been mined by numerous military historians. Such a study, especially if done with a careful eye to distinctions between decisions based on military considerations and decisions based on political considerations, would serve a useful purpose.

Committee who was still alive in 1881.

Examined closely, the story of the Lincoln visit to the Committee on the Conduct of the War vanishes after improbabilities are stacked on improbabilities. To narrow the evidence to manageable form for verification is a relatively simple task. Ignoring Edwards's mistake about the make-up of the Committee on the Conduct of the War, the curious student can very quickly show that only two men, one a Democrat, neither important figures in Congress or on the Committee (which was dominated by its energetic chairman), could possibly have told James the story. Both had been out of national public office for over a decade by 1881. The man in nearby Pennsylvania was a Democrat who probably would not have been present at the alleged session; the Republican lived a continent apart from Washington, D.C.

III. Why Believe It?

The remarkable thing is less that the evidence proves flimsy upon examination than that no one has bothered particularly to examine it. Myths feed on a greater willingness to use a story than to study it. Over the years, the Edwards-James story has served several different causes.

Almost everything written to date on the Committee on the Conduct of the War stems from the period when the abolitionists were taking a beating at the hands of American historians and when every effort was made to delineate a gulf between those Republicans with abolitionist leanings and their President. Edwards's own anecdote was largely free of taking sides in the factional dispute. Edwards said nothing harsh about the Committee, and indeed the story is supposed to have come from a member of that very Committee. Yet it was easily adaptable in other hands to that anti-abolitionist animus, and it was to that factional end that Sandburg used the story. He prefaced it with a description of "the snarling chaos of the winter of 1862-63." Amidst mutterings of "a secret movement to impeach President Lincoln," Sandburg said, "Stubbornly had he followed his own middle course, earning in both parties enemies who for different reasons wanted him out of the way." Conveniently, the names of the "radical Republicans who took part in the secret movement, . . . could only be guessed." Edwards's anecdote, though this was not its original intent, was readily adaptable for those who wished to prove the unreasonableness and immoderation of Lincoln's factional opposition.

The anecdote was kept alive by other motives. Although Ruth Painter Randall's biography of Mary Todd Lincoln gave it more dignity than it deserved by saying that it at least showed the sort of problems this Southern First Lady could have, she rejected it. Her followers have been less careful. Irving Stone's *Love Is Eternal* (1954), a sympathetic account of the Lincolns' domestic life, was a novel and could therefore invoke the story in an effort to depict the unfairness and malignity of Mrs. Lincoln's critics (see pages 380-382). Margaret Bassett's *Abraham & Mary Todd Lincoln* (1973), also a sympathetic account of Mrs. Lincoln, cited Mrs. Randall's book in the bibliography but nevertheless said that Mary Todd's character "became so much a public issue that the President was impelled to say to Congress that he guaranteed his wife's loyalty." Ishbel Ross also noted "a deep debt of gratitude to the late Ruth Painter Randall" for her sympathetic research on Mrs. Lincoln. Nevertheless, Ms. Ross's *The President's Wife: Mary Todd Lincoln* (1973) states that "It has become legendary that when he [Lincoln] heard what was afoot, he walked alone to the Capitol and appeared suddenly before the committee."

There are doubtless two forces at work here, perhaps indistinguishably. One reason for the relatively new desire to believe the best of Mary Todd and the worst of her enemies is the feminist movement which is causing a great deal of interest in the role of women in history and which allows us, for example, to see Mary Todd Lincoln's interest in politics as a forward-looking escape from the nineteenth-century female stereotype rather than as an inappropriate meddlesomeness. At the same time, some authors use the story for the sake of an almost Victorian sentimentalism, replacing the First Lady on her dignified pedestal far from the vulgar vipers in Congress. Neither form of Mary Lincoln apologetics, however, was strong enough on its own to launch the story to national popular mythic status.

That leap required powerful political motives, by which I do

not necessarily mean "party" motive (Senator Weicker is, or was, a member of the same party as Presidents Lincoln and Nixon). The fact of the matter is, nevertheless, that the anecdote was again useful to those who wished a standard of presidential accountability different from that of the incumbent President's. Use was still the criterion, and not intellectual curiosity. After President Nixon suggested a parallel between his own beleaguered presidency and Lincoln's, *Time* magazine's Hugh Sidey (in the February 25, 1974 issue) could quote historians Bruce Catton, Richard Current, and David Donald that they found the parallel forced and selective (President Nixon's speech, they said, notably ignored Lincoln's reputation for honesty). Yet *Time* did not bring up a similar battery of Lincoln historians to testify about the alleged appearance before the Committee on the Conduct of the War.

The myth of Lincoln's defense of his wife before Ben Wade's Committee is based on flimsy evidence and a great deal of desire—desire to make the abolitionists look bad, desire to make Mrs. Lincoln's critics seem at once unreasonable and influential, and desire to prescribe a standard of political behavior for today's Presidents. Whatever the merit of these desires, no cause is well served by making precedents from shoddy anecdotes. We have been watching the birth of a myth; let us hope soon to see its quiet demise.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

FIGURE 3. Mary Todd Lincoln in 1863

Mary Todd Lincoln (1818-1882), daughter of Robert Smith Todd and Eliza Parker Todd, was born on December 13, 1818, in Lexington, Kentucky. Although there is little information available on the above picture, it was supposedly taken "in the autumn of 1863" and the print was "the right-hand image of a stereograph card published by E. & H.T. Anthony Company in 1865." Mrs. Lincoln is wearing the same mourning attire that she wore for many months after the death of her third son Willie in February, 1862. See *The Photographs of Mary Todd Lincoln*, (1969) by Lloyd Ostendorf.

Abuses are nothing new

WASHINGTON

The House Judiciary Committee, as part of its historic impeachment inquiry a year ago, didn't confine itself to investigating the abuses of Richard Nixon.

Fifteen historians were hired to dig up the misconduct of his predecessors as well, going all the way back to George Washington.

The prying professors learned that John Tyler had claimed "executive privilege" to keep information from Congress, that the Abraham Lincolns had overspent their furniture budget, that Teddy Roosevelt had collected corporate contributions and that Franklin Roosevelt's tax returns had been examined.

The investigation failed, however, to uncover the illegal operations of the CIA, FBI and other federal agencies. These activities, condoned by previous Presidents, might have been ferreted out a year earlier if investigators had been employed instead of professors.

The investigation into "prior presidential abuse" was demanded by Rep. Charles Wiggins, R-Calif., one of Nixon's staunchest supporters on the committee. He insisted this was necessary "to furnish a standard to test the alleged abusive conduct of Richard Nixon."

Kept up clamor

On behalf of the minority members, Wiggins kept up a clamor for a probe of past Presidents but got the brush-off from the majority. Unknown to him, however, chief counsel John Doar decided to go ahead with it.

He assigned the investigation not to a team of investigators armed with subpoenas but to a squad of professors headed by Yale University historian C. Vann Woodward.

The committee members never learned about the Woodward study until the hearings were over and the impeachment vote had been taken. Then its existence came to the attention of the members only because they were asked to pay the professors' salaries.

Still, the study was never released to the committee members. According to Doar, it was "not in shape" to be circulated and was completed too late to be of any use.

Woodward acknowledged to us that the investigation was confined to the historical records and that the professors had no access to evidence that past Presidents had misused the CIA and FBI.

Fascinating parallels

The study, nonetheless, offers some fascinating historical parallels to the Nixon case:

— The question of whether a Vice

President can be prosecuted came up in 1804 long before Spiro Agnew was accused of bribery and income tax violations. Aaron Burr was indicted twice for murder after the famous duel in which he killed Alexander Hamilton. Since the indictments "were quietly allowed to die," the study says, "a test of whether an incumbent Vice President could stand trial under criminal law was thus not made." Ironically, Burr later returned to Washington and presided, as Senate president, over the impeachment trial of Justice Samuel Chase.

— President John Tyler, like Richard Nixon more than a century later, clashed with Congress over the doctrine of "executive privilege." In March, 1842, Tyler rejected a House demand for information about patronage applications from congressmen. The demand, he fumed, was "dangerous, impolitic and unconstitutional." Tyler's refusal, along with his record of vetoes, brought a House report recommending his impeachment. The proceedings were never started, however, because impeachment would have failed.

— Nixon also wasn't the only President to overspend government funds on his home. Mary Todd Lincoln exceeded her \$20,000 furniture budget by \$6,700 in 1861. In tears, she begged the public buildings commissioner to tell Honest Abe that "it is common to overrun appropriations." But Lincoln, says the study, wouldn't hear of it. "I'll pay it out of my pocket first," Lincoln reportedly said. "It would stink in the nostrils of the American public to have it said the President of the United States had approved a bill overrunning an appropriation of \$20,000 for flubdubs for this damned old house when the soldiers cannot have blankets."

— Nor did Nixon's men invent the practice of selling ambassadorships. President Grover Cleveland, for example, received \$50,000 from a wealthy Rhode Islander named James Van Alen in 1892. The following year, Van Alen was appointed minister to Italy. But after a furor over the impropriety, he resigned the post.

— Teddy Roosevelt, to whom Nixon turned admiringly in his tearful farewell address, was accused, as was Nixon, of accepting large corporate contributions. The Woodward study claims more than 70 per cent of the \$2.2 million collected by the GOP in 1904 came from giant corporations — among them U.S. Steel, \$216,000, and Standard Oil, \$150,000.

— Nixon also wasn't the first President who didn't practice what he preached. Warren Harding solemnly called for "individual compliance and more state action" to enforce prohibition laws at the same time that he was

hitting the bottle himself inside the White House. But in January, 1923, according to the study, "Harding announced he had become a total abstainer."

—It turns out that Nixon also wasn't the first President whose income tax returns were examined by Congress. Critics of President Franklin Roosevelt charged that he had filed inaccurate returns. Congress subsequently cleared Roosevelt of the charge, with one Republican acknowledging that Roosevelt had submitted "an eminently fair return."

Yet no previous President, so far as the study shows, committed the variety and enormity of offenses that have been attributed to Richard Nixon.

Footnote: The contributing professors, after collecting \$10,791.27 from the taxpayers to compile a tome on presidential improprieties, collected another \$11,000 from Dell publishing company for the rights to publish the manuscript. Yet the manuscript, presumably, belonged to the taxpayers who previously had paid for it. A spokesman for Dell said the company had "agreed to withhold publication until it was cleared with Doar."

6/27/1975

Nixon Redux, Reassessed

10 Years Out, but Not Down

By Raymond K. Price Jr.

Americans still find Richard Nixon endlessly fascinating, partly because they find him so puzzling — such a seeming bundle of contradictions and conundrums. He has been a major national figure for almost 40 years now, a central part of the political experience of three generations. Few leaders in history have gone so high and been flung so low. And yet he has endured.

It took 30 years for Herbert Hoover, long reviled as a modern Caligula, to be reassessed. Reassessment took 20 years for Harry S. Truman — the only President whose Gallup approval ratings in office dropped lower than Mr. Nixon's lowest. The reassessment of Richard Nixon is well under way only 10 years after his resignation, on Aug. 9, 1974. This should not be surprising, for two reasons.

First, the pendulum of history swings more rapidly now.

Second, the attitudes that prevailed 10 years ago were spawned by national hysteria, and hysteria does not last. As it fades, people begin to search again for perspective.

In the public's mind, "Watergate" came to mean vastly more than a break-in at Democratic national headquarters and a subsequent clumsy cover-up. Wild charges flew in all directions, breathless hints were rushed on the airwaves. Sixteen months of relentless pounding, the most intensive coverage ever given any story in the history of the Republic, created a climate in which even the most outlandish charge had only to be made in order to be believed.

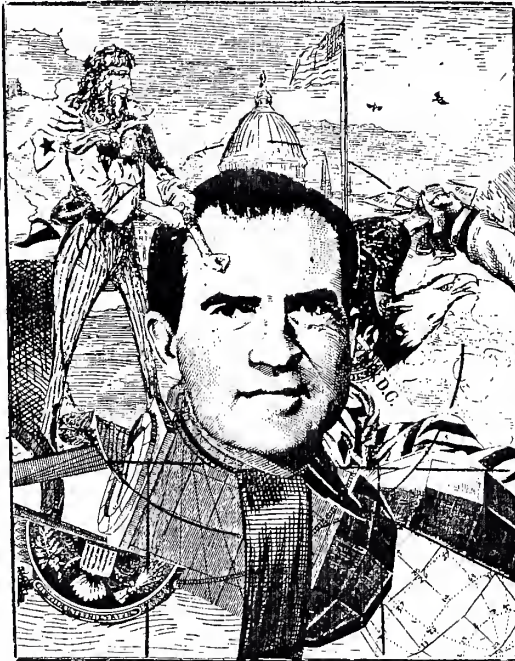
The crowds gathered outside the White House in that final week looked in and saw what they perceived as unprecedented corruption of power and a threat to their liberties. From inside the White House, we looked out and saw what we perceived as a system run amok. A special prosecution force had been recruited lopsidedly from the staffs of the Kennedys and George McGovern. On Capitol Hill, partisan Congressional committees had been brandishing subpoenas and furiously leaking unsubstantiated allegations, abetted by an opportunistic clique of journalists. We also saw our efforts to forge a system of international ties that could keep the peace through the perilous final decades of the century being cast, almost casually, to the Watergate winds.

In the years since, passions have cooled. The achievements and sins of the Nixon Administration are beginning to be weighted together, like those of other administrations, in the same historical balance. Myths persist, but truths are catching up.

Richard Nixon is no devil; neither is he a saint. But most Americans have a basic, gut recognition that a saint would make a disastrous President. The job descriptions are different. We hire Presidents to look after the nation's interests in a brutal, dangerous, lawless world. A President has to be concerned with the morality of process, but even more so with the morality of consequence.

Every act, every decision, has consequences that may reverberate halfway across the country or halfway around the world. The worst thing a President can do is to be so paralyzed by propriety that he shrinks from bending the rules when the nation's security requires it. Those past Presidents we hail as "strong" — Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, F.D.R. — all bent the rules far past the breaking point, Lincoln most egregiously of all. But history sanctioned their acts on the grounds that the times required it.

The successful President is idealistic in what he seeks, but often crafty, duplicitous, scheming, conniving in the ways he pursues it — because the essence of his job is to prevail over a sea of conflicting interests in order to



Anita Siegel

advance the national interest. He has to create and manipulate a constantly shifting mix of coalitions, first for one purpose and then for another, edging the country, however indirectly, toward his vision of its future.

Among Presidents, the true idealist is the one who does not shrink from getting his feet into the muck, if necessary, in order to make things better in a harsh and imperfect world. In war, we give medals of honor to men who cover themselves in blood and slime, risking all, doing what in another environment would be repugnant to every moral sensibility, because in that environment it becomes necessary, not to the man, but to the nation. Yet a soldier's responsibility for the nation's safety pales before that of a President.

Strong leaders arouse strong passions. Typically, those most extravagantly admired are also the most extravagantly detested. Like him or not, Richard Nixon is what the French call an *homme sérieux*, a man of large vision who knows the world and whose views carry weight. However grudgingly, even those who hate his guts respect his mind. Even those who disagree most vehemently know that he thinks before he speaks.

In an age that exalts the trivial, Richard Nixon is one of the last of the true heavyweights. And this, in the final analysis, is why he endures, why even many who cheered at his downfall discover themselves, to their own surprise, perversely glad to find him back. □

